

Governor weighs director candidates

Steven Oberbeck

By Steven Oberbeck The Salt Lake Tribune

449 words

18 October 2006

[The Salt Lake Tribune](#)

n/a

English

Copyright (c) 2006 Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company. All rights reserved.

The search to find a new executive director for the **Committee of Consumer Services** finally may be nearing an end.

A search committee charged with identifying potential candidates to replace former executive director Leslie Reberg has sent the names of two finalists to Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. for consideration.

The candidates are Michele Beck, a former Utahn who has a strong background in public utilities and their regulation, and Stephen Thompson, a businessman and member of the Logan City Council.

"Both are extremely strong candidates," said Francine Giani, director of the **Utah Department of Commerce** who chaired the six- member selection committee.

Thompson and Beck are expected to meet with the governor next week.

The directorship of the committee, which was established in 1977 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers in rate cases, has been open since April when Reberg stepped down to pursue a run for Salt Lake County recorder.

Utility watchdog Claire Geddes, who also served on the selection committee, agreed that both Beck and Thompson are strong candidates. She lamented, though, that selection committee members weren't able to question the candidates in depth.

"It is hard to make a recommendation when all you've had is one short interview," Geddes said.

"They both responded well to the questions they were asked but I would have liked more time to try and determine if they really have the passion to stick up for consumers and take on the utilities and the other powers-that-be."

The **Committee of Consumer Services** is the only defense **Utah** residents have against rising electricity and natural gas rates, she said. "And we need someone who is tenacious and isn't willing to back down in the face of political pressure."

Dee Jay Hammon, chairman of the consumer services committee and a member of the selection panel, said both candidates received unanimous support from search committee members.

"I'm glad it is the governor and not me who has to make the decision," Hammon said. "Michele Beck has a strong background in utilities and really knows the business. And while Stephen Thompson does not have as much direct experience, he is involved as a member of the Logan City Council with that city's municipal power system."

Huntsman, however, still can decide to reject both candidates.

It happened before. Earlier this year the same selection committee that sent Thompson's and Beck's names to the governor previously submitted the names of four candidates for consideration.

Huntsman turned them all down and asked that the search be reopened.

steve@sltrib.com

Document SLTR000020061019e2ai00042